Under Valley

INTERVIEW WITH meow meow

#1 JAN. 2025

A WORD

This is hopefully the first of many versions or issues of Undervalley. I think New Paltz & the Hudson Valley have a pretty great music scene and it deserves some paper coverage. I have a few strong beliefs about the impermanence of digital record keeping, but paper is physical and will probably survive a solar flare or maybe even the collapse of a society. Plus, this is cooler.

This whole thing is largely inspired by older zines. I find scans of shit from the 70s and 80s on archive.org, and see a lot of coverage of local music scenes. My favorite that I'm copying the most from is Anti-Climax, published starting in the late 70s. It focused on the UK punk scene at time, interviewing bands like Killing Joke, The Damned, & UK Decay during their primes. Now it's 2025 and punk is still alive, even if it looks a little different.

MEOW MEOW. They've been one of my favorite New Paltz bands for a long time, and it was an honor to interview them. I knew Sydney from a few old jam sessions, and she got me in touch with the rest of the band. I met up with them at a basement show, and I interviewed them after their set. The place was called Nebraska and the guy running it is Owen, frontman of another New Paltz band EMERSON LAURA PALMER. A big thank you to him for putting together a show and then tolerating us loitering around in is living room for half an hour.

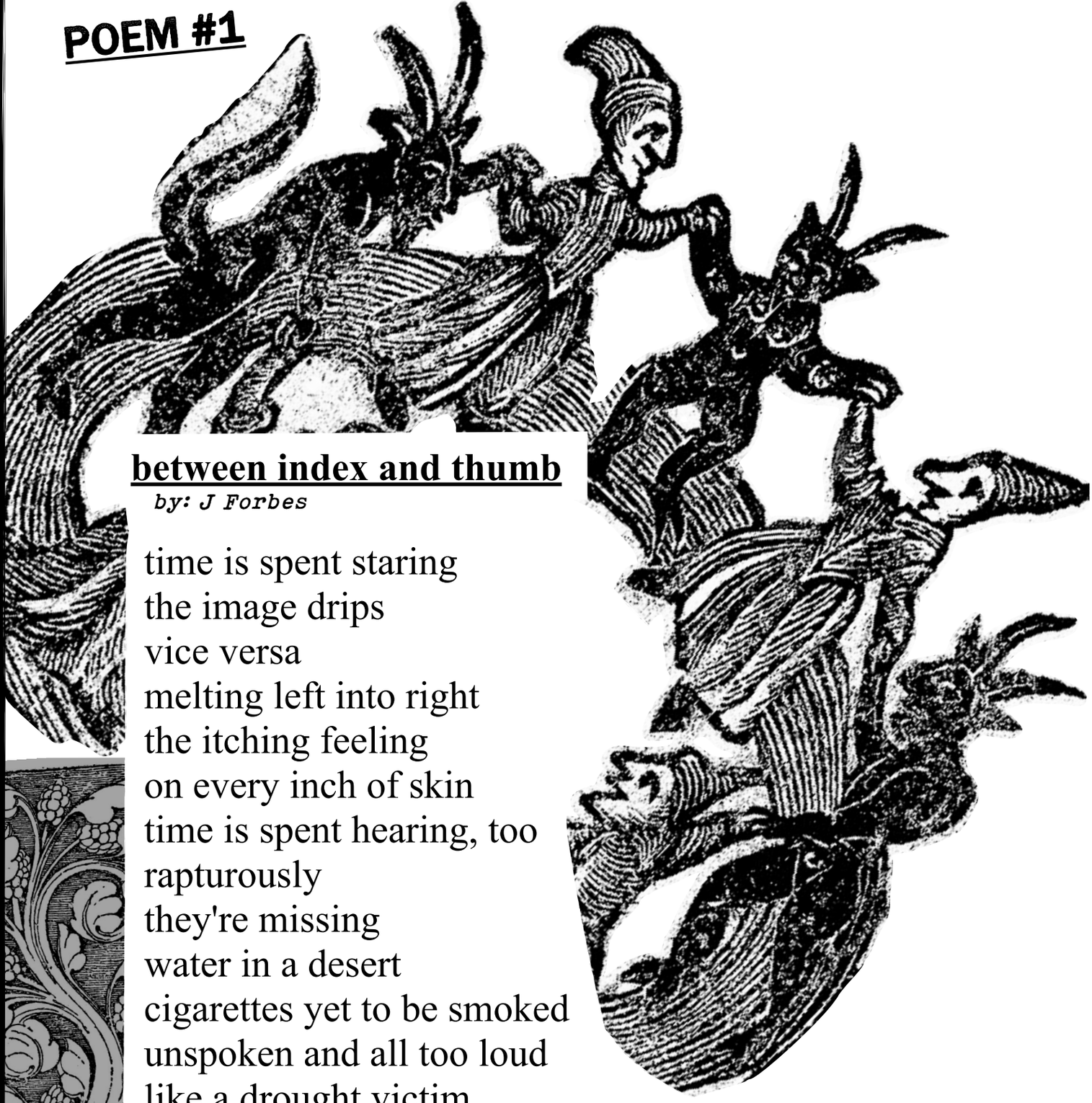
I guess the point of this is to have something physical around. The internet today is unrecognizable compared to thirty years ago. Three decades on from now that shit will probably be different too, and all those Instagram photos will be gone forever. But a booklet like this can be kept and read for years on end.

I had a few extra pages to fill so I asked around for poetry. I'm not a publicist or a professional, but it seemed like a better option than another two pages of my opinions.

Enjoy.

-Miles

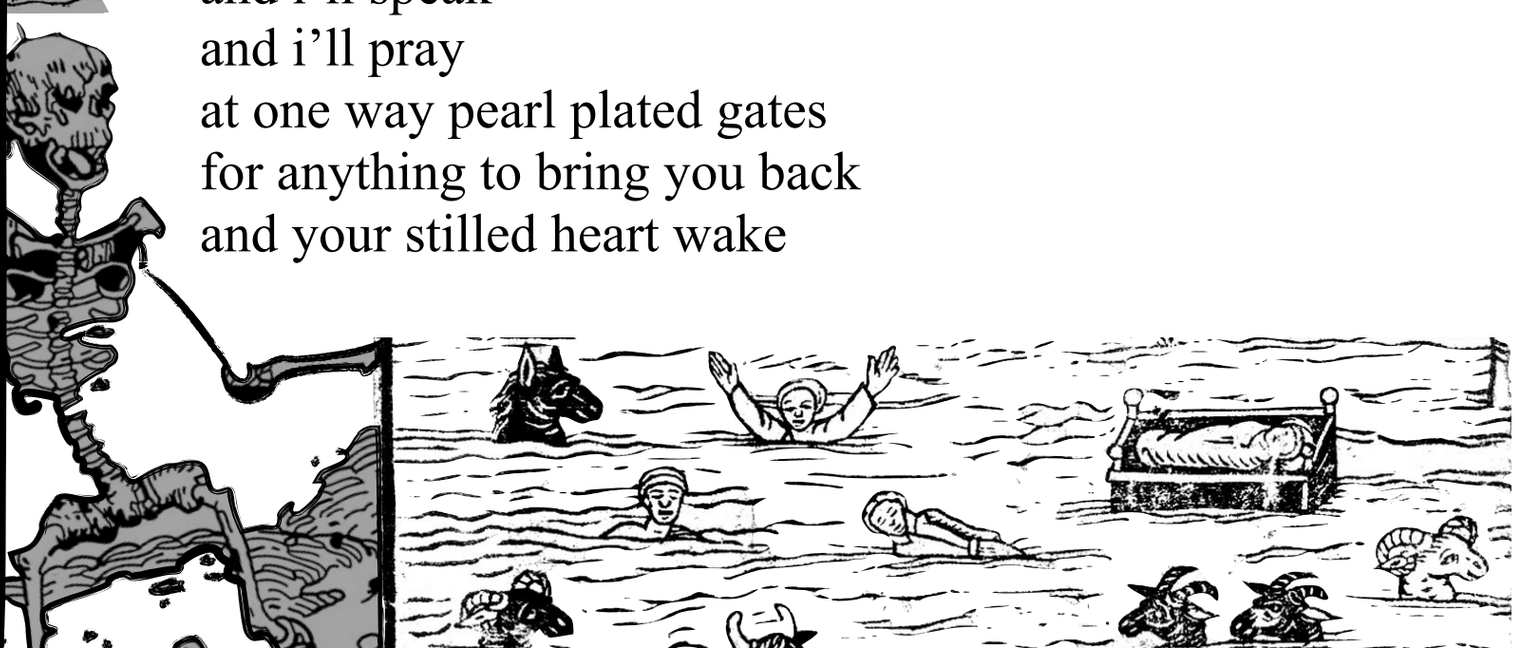
POEM #1



between index and thumb

by: J Forbes

time is spent staring
the image drips
vice versa
melting left into right
the itching feeling
on every inch of skin
time is spent hearing, too
rapturously
they're missing
water in a desert
cigarettes yet to be smoked
unspoken and all too loud
like a drought victim
i am sitting mouth wide open underneath the drip
i am sitting mouth open
and i'll speak
and i'll pray
at one way pearl plated gates
for anything to bring you back
and your stilled heart wake



MEOW

MEOW

INTERVIEWED BY MILES ON DECEMBER 14TH, 2024 IN THE LIVING ROOM OF LOCAL VENUE NEBRASKA (THANKS OWEN!).

My camera broke trying to get flicks, so thank you to Emma Montenegro for letting me use some photos for this. She took all the smaller printed shots of the band members. Check them out @embellastudios on Instagram.

Miles: You started today's set with two unreleased songs- one of them called "Undulate", which you also played a few weeks ago in a session for Cart Music in Philly. How much new music do you have cooking?

Kitty: We have about ten songs, five of which are fully composed. I think the other five need work, I'm thinking about "Decay" specifically. We're working on the album as we speak. Maybe summer? Spring/summer is in my mind. Is that realistic? Probably not, but that's what I have in my head.

Miles: Does it have a name yet?

Kitty: It's gonna be called *A Tree to Wrap Your Car Around*, and we're really excited about it.

Miles: Speaking of music, you just release a single on trans day of remembrance called "Trampled Flowers". Do you wanna talk about that?

Kitty: It's about feeling caught between worlds and pushed out of one or the other. I've had a lot of ups and downs with my experience with gender identity. In high school, I identified as a binary trans guy, I was so sure that I wanted to medically transition. After I got out of high school, I was identifying more with butch lesbianism, and now I'm back in this sort of fluidity. I've had that experience where I'd be in

the women's bathroom with a buzzed head, or I'm binding, and someone would walk in and say "oh, am I in the right bathroom?" That kind of experience where even when I was identifying as a quote unquote woman, I never really felt accepted in any space that I was in. As I'm stepping more into the fluidity of things, a girl/boy combination has felt really meaningful for me to embrace. That's where the lyrics come from, about feeling hidden.

Harry: The title "Trampled Flowers" comes from an interaction I had with my third grade crush. I had a big crush on this girl, & as a sort of romantic offering, I picked out flowers from the park at recess and gave them to her, and then walked away 'cause I got really shy. When I turned back, I saw she was with her friends trampling the flowers. Hence the name. The riff was also inspired by that.

Kitty: I think it has a lot to do with this early meaningful memory of rejection.

Harry: Another issue I had at that time was that -I was diagnosed to be on the autism spectrum- I didn't really understand a lot body language, how interactions are supposed to go. A lot of the ways I based interactions on when I was younger was just from movies. So for me, offering that girl flowers was the most sincere form of self expression I could make. That sense of rejection really plays into the inspiration of riff.

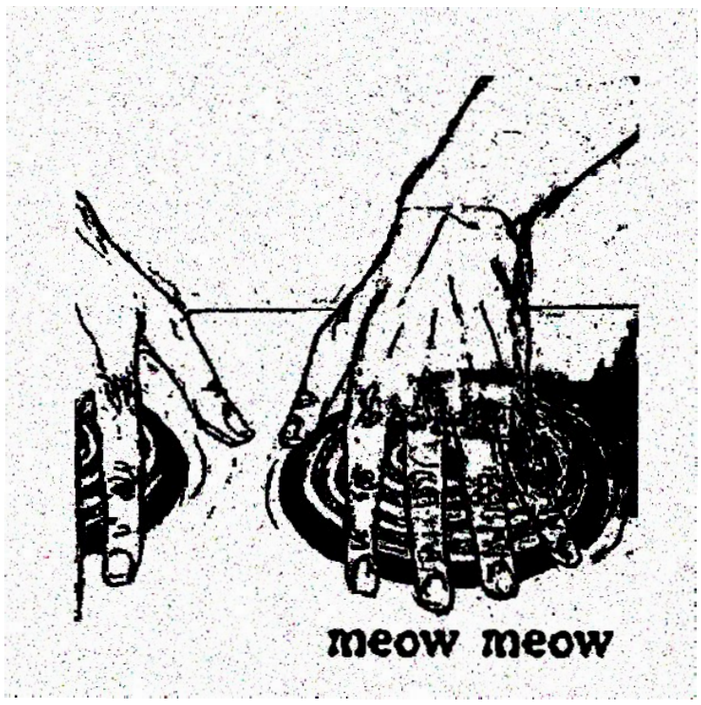
Miles: Ya'll posted on your instagram a bit ago, that the song had a huge spike in streams on thanksgiving day.

Kitty: Yeah! Five hundred streams on thanksgiving day.

Miles: Do you think it hit it's target audience?

Kitty: Yeah. My heart goes out to everyone who was blasting that through their headphones-

Ash: Hiding in their room on thanksgiving.



Miles: A question for Harry; going back in time a bit to 2023, When I listen to *Palms on the Stove* I notice your guitar lines have a unique sound compared to a lot of punk music- they're very melodic and open-ended, and I'm wondering what your thought processes are when coming up with these parts?

Harry: I was inspired by a lot of classic rock acts like Queen, ACDC, Brian May- I absolutely love his style of guitar playing. A lot of those guitarists echo the same idea of the lead guitar almost being a voice itself and having a conversation with the lead. I really wanted to take that as an inspiration for how I write. I don't want to be too passive, I want to be an active voice in the conversation, I want to be almost talking with Kitty.

Miles: [to Celina) In terms of the conversation of the song, how do you play into this with the saxophone lines?

Celina: Fun fact about Meow Meow, it first was Kitty, Ash, and Harry. An acoustic act with no drums, no horns, and then adding drums and horns later. I came into the picture two weeks before a very important show, we played in Brooklyn at Saint Vitus Bar (RIP, no longer exists). A little about about my background, I have a jazz background and a classically trained background even though I play the saxophone. I played a lot of violin solos and flute solos because I would go to state competitions for orchestral music, but the saxophone wasn't invented until around 1850 so there was no saxophone music for me to compete with. When I sat in with Meow Meow for our first practice I was kind of thrown off. I saw them one time a couple days before at Radioshack with a trombone and a trumpet. I was listening to their demos like "what am I supposed to play here? Why are they asking me, a saxophonist, to be here

right now?" But coming around to the second practice I was just feeding off of Kitty's vocal lines, and that noodley style of Harry's playing. Really feeding into those vocal, almost sing-song lines you would find in a violin piece or a flute piece. And that's how we came to the first album, and I feel we found our way to the music we have now. "Undulate" and "Trampled Flowers" are a lot more punchy punky because we were able to experiment with the softer, melodic side of things.

Miles: Going back to that era of when it was just Ash, Kitty, and Harry- your first ever single was "A Deadbeat Laments". That song also made it onto your first EP with another song called "A Deadbeat Laments, Over and Over Again", which got re-recorded for your debut album. What's the story behind this song?

Kitty: So this is actually the origins of Meow Meow. I did a lot of songwriting in high school and I performed by myself, but by the time I get to college I'm like "I have *got* to get a friend on stage". My ex-girlfriend had given me a bass and I was trying to work out the bass parts by myself, but I needed someone else to do it. I put the bass in Ash's hands and I was like "you need to learn this because I want us to be in a band". At that point, I knew Harry through another friend, so he would kind of be in the background at social sittings, but we weren't really close (even though we lived in the same building). So, we were in a study room. I had written "A Deadbeat Laments" figuring it would just be the two of us. Harry was walking by, saw us through the glass, popped their head in and was like "Okay! I'll be right back with my guitar!" and we said "Oh god damn it! I don't know if this is gonna work..." Harry has such a strong voice in music I wasn't sure if we would work well together. And then Harry came in, listened to us play through the song once, and wrote that riff. I just love that riff, I love your parts on a Deadbeat Laments. And from there it became it's own thing.

Ash: I had never played the bass or guitar before we got in a band together. Kitty said "play this!" and I was like "I don't know how". But we figured it out.

Miles: Are "A Deadbeat Laments" and "A Deadbeat Laments, Over and Over Again" two versions of the same song?

Kitty: I felt that the chords were too similar to be different songs, but I had different lyrics for each of them. So I just said "call it a part two and then I don't have to write new chords".

Zildjian

Harry: Doing the embellishments for "Over and Over Again" with the prior knowledge of "A Deadbeat Laments" was so so much fun. Pretty much everything I do is some form of callback to the first song. Having it on the album with the full band, it felt so right. It just felt like such a wonderful way to mark that period, and all the trials and tribulations we made it through on the way. I still get a little choked up at Kitty's vocals in the last chorus, and Selina's sax parts at the end.

Miles: Now I have the most important question of the interview. On August 4th 2024, the band's Instagram posted an easy four ingredient recipe for dump cake.

Celina: Hello! Social media manager talking. At the time there was this meme going around about making captions on your posts. Like "here's an easy recipe for brownies." Right before that on Kitty's birthday we played a show with a band called Dump Cake. Instead of doing the brownie thing, it was just a reference to them.

Kitty: We need to shout out Dump Cake.

Celina: Huge shout out to Dump Cake, my bestie Matt. Mwah mwah mwah.

Kitty: Matt recorded, mixed, and mastered "Trampled Flowers" and hopefully we'll be working with him for the rest of the album.

Harry: Stream *Provolone, Buford* by Dump Cake, it's so fucking good. It's all the rock and midwest emo you could ever ask for.

Miles: You said he's helping on the rest of the album, does that mean "Trampled Flowers" is on the upcoming album?

Kittie: Yes. Spoilers.

Miles: A question for Sydney. You have a Car Seat Headrest tattoo.

Sydney: I do!

Miles: How have they influenced you?

Sydney: Wow. I didn't think I'd be asked about Car Seat Headrest today. They're my favorite band ever. I found them at a time when I was very musically uninspired.

I never thought I would touch drums ever again, I wasn't interested in making music. And they were the first band that I had found since my emo middle school bands that changed everything. I thought about them all the time. I listened to *Twin Fantasy* all the time. And then I saw them. The drums are amazing on that album but I never really clocked it until I saw them, and I was like "holy shit". Watching people play is so different than listening to it. They just kind of were inspiring overall, to get back into music and to create more. Sometimes you just need to find somebody like that, that strikes a chord and brings it back. And you're like " Oh, okay. This makes sense. This is why people do this." Celina did my tattoo also.

Miles: Do you wanna plug the tattoo business?

Celina: Hello. Please follow @celinacomo on instagram and my art page @cvltqveen. Commissions are open.

Miles: How long have you been playing drums for Sydney?

Sydney: I started very early, like 4 or 5. I played for my elementary school band, full kit. I played for my middle school jazz band, and I had a horrible experience in my middle school jazz band. Horrible.

Miles: It's middle school, how good could it be?

Sydney: Lessons and school bands in general just never really was my thing. I would get panic attacks before performances. It just got to a point where it wasn't fun, I guess? So then I didn't play drums at all in high school. I didn't really do anything music-wise. Then I went to college here, we moved into our house, and we wanted to have shows at our house. So I was like "oh I have a drum kit back at home, I'll bring it". So I brought it and it was set up and it was down there. So I was like "I guess I'll start playing again." I'd jam with some people. Like you. Just random people that I would meet, just to get back into the swing of things. And then I hooked up with these guys and now it's a thing, and I'm very happy that it's a thing again.

Miles: That's all my questions, so the last thing is open ended. Talk about whatever the fuck you want.

Harry: Since we're doing band plugs, I do wanna plug my other band Will They Won't They. We are a three piece mostly based in Orange County, but we do shows up here.

Kitty: I feel an extreme amount of gratitude that people pay attention to us. There's a lot of bands that aren't afforded that privilege of being able to to build a community in a space like New Paltz for as long as we were in college. I feel so grateful that people gave us a chance. Especially because we were birthed the month before covid hit. So trying to rebuild in this scene was difficult. But I feel an intense honor when people message us or come up to me and talk about how much it means to be able to follow a queer band or to hear these self-deprecatory emo lyrics that I tend to lean towards. That's my piece.

Celina: My piece is start a band. I don't care how, I don't care what instrument you play. You don't have to play an instrument, look at us! Ash didn't play an instrument until Kitty put one in their hands! If you play the tambourine? Great. If you scream, that's awesome. If you sing, kind of, at karaoke, do it on stage. You're doing it anyway, why not? It does not matter what you play or don't play. Be involved in your scene somehow. Don't have a scene? Make your own scene.

Harry: When I was in 8th grade, I was playing violin and I just quit outright, and I said "I'm never picking up another instrument again". And then the greatest thing I ever did was pick up guitar, because it connected me to all these amazing people. It's never too late to start playing music with people. One of the many great things that has come out of being in this band is seeing how much people have connected with our music. I still think about the covers that we've been sent.

Celina: People DMing us for tabs.

Kitty: We actually just had a band from Glasgow message us about getting the tabs for Trampled Flowers. I just told Harry downstairs actually, dude we need to get on Ultimate Guitar. We can just send out the links.

Harry: The moment you told me someone wanted the tabs I sat down, wrote them out at like 1 o' clock in the morning. I could not be happier, it fills me with such delight. But yeah, start a band. Shout out also Jake from Voicemail for doing that immaculate cover of "I Forgot My Coat At My Ex's House".

Celina: My friends. Use your voice.

Sydney: I'll say something! My fi- Syd's final thoughts: I came into the band kind of recently, and I just wanted to say that it's been such a wonderful experience. Everybody here is so talented and such good people. It's exactly the type of thing I always wanted to do and the type of people that I would want to do it with. It's so easy to get insecure that you're not good enough, or not finding the right people, or it's awkward or whatever. It's been a really good experience and I'm really happy that you guys have welcomed me into your thing. Any final thoughts Ash?

Ash: Oh no, I think you guys have done really well.

YOU CAN LISTEN TO MEOW MEOW'S LATEST SINGLES "TRAMPLED FLOWERS" & "UNDULATE" WHEREVER YOU FIND YOUR MUSIC.

FOLLOW THEM @MEOWMEOWBAND

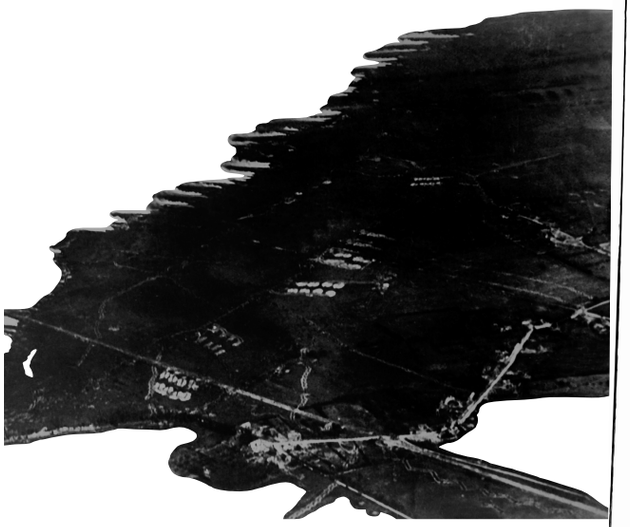
POEM #2

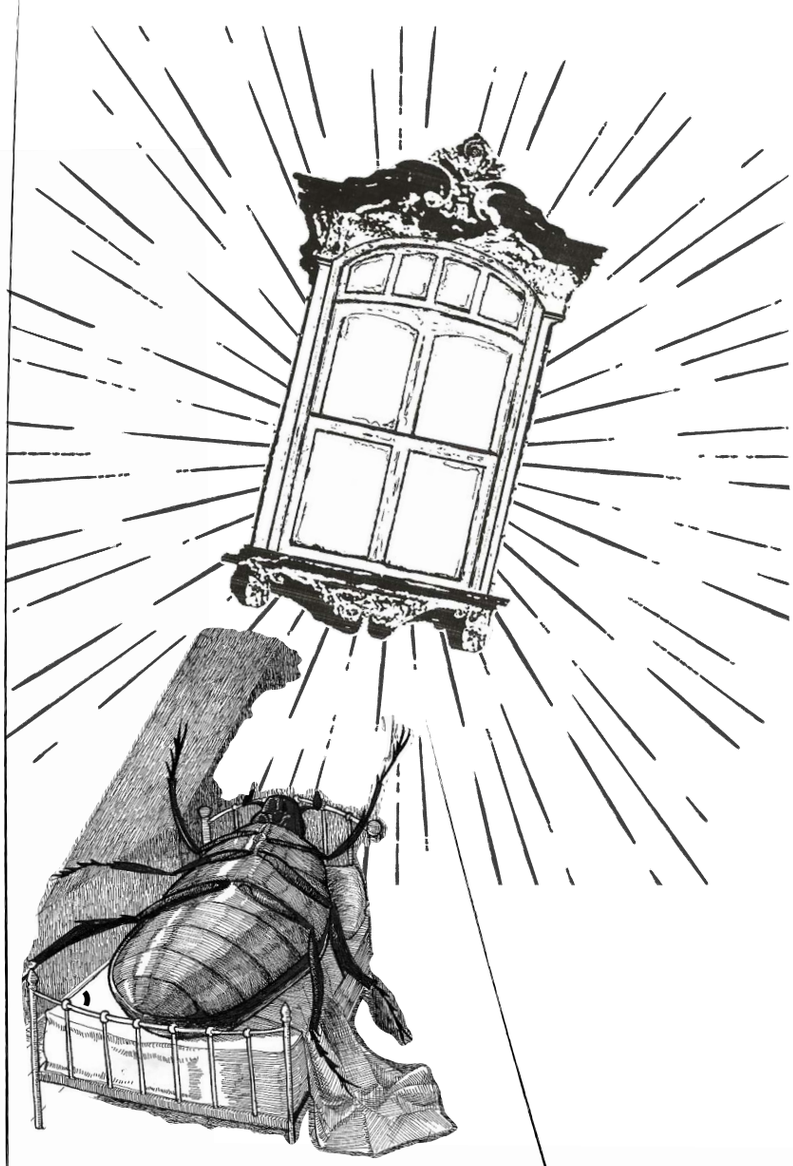
Upturn

by: Adi Elkarat

Dead bugs in my apartment,
on the floor.
The tenant here before
me left cans upon cans
of roach killer
in the drawers,
cans upon cans
which I will not use
because the window
won't move and the fumes
would be unbearable.

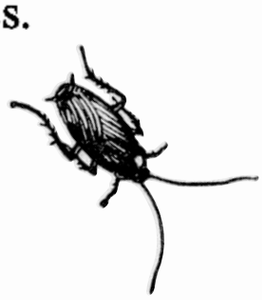
And they are dead
already, anyhow, move
only when I open
doors they died by.
Facing stiffly sky-
ward, most inconveniently
they died.

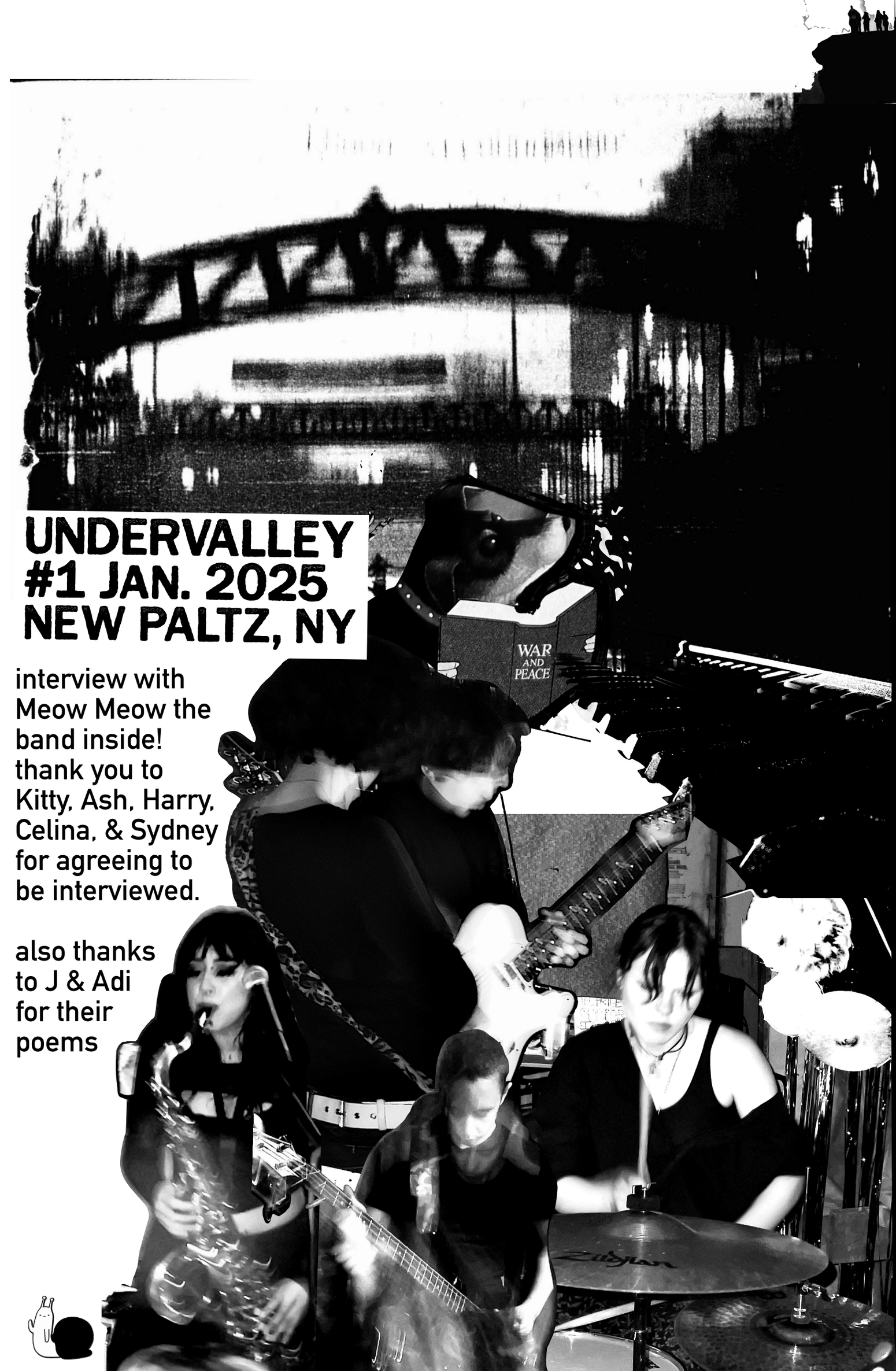




The dead continue
to appear, although
I never see the living.
The upturned I am too
disaffected to dispose
of, knowing they would crunch
between my fingers
like stale candy or thin glass.

So I allow them to amass.
One hundred thousand Gregor Samsa
on my carpeting like grass.
And I begin to sleep
upturned, my hands
and feet skyward
to make the quiet masses
comfortable.





UNDERVALLEY #1 JAN. 2025 NEW PALTZ, NY

interview with Meow Meow the band inside!
thank you to Kitty, Ash, Harry, Celina, & Sydney for agreeing to be interviewed.

also thanks to J & Adi for their poems